



**North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Office of Public Affairs**

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MEDIA ADVISORY
Bait Program Aims to Decrease Raccoon Rabies

RALEIGH — The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) wildlife services' (WS) program will begin distributing oral rabies vaccination baits on Monday, Oct. 4, in portions of western North Carolina as part of a multi-state effort to prevent the spread of raccoon rabies. North Carolina is part of a vaccination zone established by the USDA from Maine to Alabama to prevent the westward and northward spread of raccoon rabies. Geographic features such as large lakes and rivers as well as the Appalachian Mountains act as natural barriers that help define the vaccination zone.

The Greeneville, Tennessee-based project will cover parts of Tennessee, North Carolina and Virginia and distribute 716,850 baits by fixed-wing aircraft and 121,320 by hand. Oral rabies vaccination baits are coated with a fishmeal attractant and may be packaged in one-inch square cubes or two-inch plastic sachets. Humans and pets cannot get rabies from contact with the baits, but are asked to leave them undisturbed should they encounter them.

According to APHIS, this type of oral vaccine has been shown to be safe in more than 60 different species of animals, including domestic dogs and cats. Dogs that consume large numbers of baits may experience an upset stomach, but there are no long-term health risks. Should contact with baits occur, immediately rinse the contact area with warm water and soap. For photos of the vaccination baits, please visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/photo_gallery.shtml.

Raccoon rabies is found in virtually every county in North Carolina, and raccoon-variant rabies is responsible for the majority of rabies cases in domestic and wild animals throughout North Carolina. To date in 2010, the N.C. State Laboratory of Public Health has confirmed 164 positive cases of rabies in raccoons.

Most sightings of rabid raccoons occur during the spring and summer months when people are more likely to come into contact with wildlife. Raccoon rabies is caused by a virus that infects the central nervous system in mammals. Signs suggesting rabies infection include unusual, aggressive or calm and "friendly" behavior, an inability to eat or drink, balance problems, circling, seizures, coma and finally death. While rabies is fatal, human exposures can be successfully treated, if treatment is sought immediately following a bite.

For additional information concerning the raccoon oral rabies vaccination program, please visit http://www.aphis.usda.gov/wildlife_damage/oral_rabies/index.shtml or contact WS toll free at 1-866-4-USDA-WS (1-866-487-3297).

Andy Moore is the Statesville-based district supervisor for the USDA Wildlife Service. He may be reached at 1-866-487-3297.

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